



The great treks

The GR10

The fame of this long-distance hiking route linking Hendaye to Banyuls is well established! Belonging to the great family of GR, it is marked out from start to finish and well maintained. It nonetheless remains a demanding path: although it does not require special skills, you still need to be in good physical health. This route has the advantage of descending into the valleys which allows you to get supplies and discover the variety of Pyrenean villages.

The GR11 (Senda Pyrénéica)

Created in 1986, this trek takes you through the Spanish side of the Pyrenees. Departing from Cabo Higuer and arriving in Cap de Creus, it has nothing in common with its French counterpart apart from using the same red and white markings. This magnificent route will never cease to amaze you! However due to fewer refreshment points and refuges, good planning and organization are essential.

The HRP (Haute Route Pyrénéenne)

Engraved in the history of the Pyrenean adventures by Georges Véron, the HRP will make you walk up to ridges and across borders. This more technical requires good physical condition. The trek is not marked and involves some technical difficulties. It is strongly advised to go in summer.

GRT

Recently, the routes of the Grandes Randonnée Transfrontalières (crossborder great treks) have been introduced in the Pyrenees, between France, Spain and Andorra. They connect refuges without you having to worry about borders!



Life in a refuge

Mountain refuges are neither huts nor mountain hotels. They are managed by caretakers deeply attached to their shelter who will do everything in their power to make you feel welcome.

The guardians are in charge of the life of the refuge: they will wake you, prepare your meals, clean your room and manage all the supplies. They can give you advice on your choice of route and on the weather conditions.

You can help them by offering to bring up fresh produce or the mail.

The refuge is a friendly living space where everyone must respect the rules of community life. Mountaineers and hikers go to bed early because they often get up before dawn. Around 9:30 p.m., the place must be silent.

Dinner is served around 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., so please be on time! It usually consists of soup as a starter, followed by a single main course with meat and starchy food, then some cheese and dessert.

The guardians often offer tasty meals made from local produce. Your help in clearing

and participating in the cleanup will be appreciated. Please let the guardians know when you leave. For a good night's sleep in a refuge, do not forget to bring: earplugs, headlamp, warm clothes, sheets (duvets and blankets are available on site and will need to be folded upon departure)

Hiking with children

Plan a walking time adapted to everyone's capabilities. A healthy 5-year-old is able to walk for several hours as long as one respects his pace and takes regular breaks.

As the hike is not of contemplative or sporting interest to them, you can make a game out of it and present it as a big adventure or a treasure hunt.

For a first experience in the mountain, it is preferable to choose a refuge which can be easily and quickly accessed. Always leave room to give children time to enjoy the hike. Choose your route based on the weather forecast. If the weather is uncertain, do not go on a long hike.

Bivouac

It is sometimes possible to pitch your tent around refuges in dedicated areas of bivouac. The services offered by the refuge are accessible according to the operating rules of each one of them. For any information, please contact the guardians.

You can then order a hot meal with the guardian.

In practice, you have to pitch your tent one hour before sunset and take it down one hour after sunrise.

Rucksack essentials

Here is a summary of what is useful to pack in your backpack (minimum 30 L) for a basic hike:

Equipment

- 1 flask (or camelbak) of at least one liter
- 1 pair of high protection sunglasses
- 1 sun protection cream and stick (face and lips)
- 1 headlamp or flashlight
- 1 survival blanket, safety whistle, pocket knife and lighter
- 1 detailed IGN type map
- 1 bin bag
- 1 sleeping bag liner or similar (light fabric, there are quilts or blankets in the shelters)
- 1 small personal pharmacy (for blisters, paracetamol, personal medication...)



Clothes

- 1 pair of hiking boots
- 1 waterproof jacket (K-way, GoreTex or poncho also covering the bag)
- 1 fleece or warm sweater
- 1 warm or thin fleece shirt
- 1 warm pants or tights
- 1 good pair of spare socks
- 1 cap, beanie or hat

Safety in the mountains

Hiking requires prudence and a minimum of precautions. Inappropriate behaviour can lead to a risky situation or even an accident. In a group, it is important that an adult is identified as the responsible lead. Children should always be in sight and within earshot.

Before leaving, it is necessary to:

- Obtain a precise IGN map (references given on the refuges' websites or by the guardians),
- Find out about the weather conditions in tourist office or on the web: www.aemet.es for Spain www.meteo.ad for Andorra www.meteofrance.fr for France

If there is a risk of a thunderstorm, it is better to postpone your time of departure. If bad weather is planned over several days, it is preferable to postpone your stay. In the mountains, the weather can change quickly. A storm can occur at the end of the day and give way to good weather the next.

In the mountains, the weather can change quickly. A storm can occur at the end of the day and give way to good weather the next morning. The mountain is no less beautiful with an overcast sky.

An unexpected change of weather, a child or an adult who are more tired than expected must lead you to take a prompt decision. It is often wiser to give up than to continue under bad conditions. If you are closer to the refuge, it is best to finish the climb and take shelter there. If you decide not to get to the refuge, please let the guardians know so they will not be worried.

112

If you are the victim or witness of an accident, please call the emergency services by dialling 112. In the refuges, the guardians know how to manage these emergency situations and can get in touch with emergency services.

Pastoralism

In the mountains it is common to walk through summer pastures.

It is strongly advised to bypass the herd so as not to disturb them. To protect herds from predators, shepherds work with patou dogs. These dogs are part of the herds, but when a stranger arrives, their instinct prompts them to intervene. Most often, this intervention is purely dissuasive.

If the hiker remains calm and does not make sudden gestures, and shows a passive attitude, the patou will have no reason to attack. If you have a dog on a leash, keep it close to you and walk away quietly (most importantly, do not walk through the herd).



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